

April 2009



# Leisure Access Services

Park and Recreation services for people with disabilities

## Growing our Paralympic Sports Club programs through grants

### Contact Information

#### Leisure Access Administration

7300 Crandon Blvd  
305-365-3128  
305-365-6705 (TDD)

#### AD Barnes

3401 SW 72 Ave.  
305-665-5319  
305-669-4052 (TDD)

#### Coral Estates Park

1405 SW 97 Ave.  
305-226-1622  
305-222-2128 (TDD)

#### Goulds Park

11350 SW 216 St.  
305-234-1673  
305-234-1712 (TDD)

#### Greynolds Park

17530 W. Dixie Highway  
305-945-3425

#### Camp Matecumbe

13841 SW 120 St.  
305-752-4966  
305-385-6230 (TDD)

#### Tamiami Park

11201 SW 24 St.  
305-222-2128  
305-222-2175 (TDD)

#### Westwind Lakes

6805 SW 152 Ave.  
305-380-9106

#### Paralympic Sports

305-382-8160/  
305-385-6230 (TDD)



In 2008, Miami Dade Parks became a member of the US Paralympic Sports Club. Since then, our disability sports programs have grown. We grew our aquatics programs by adding two fitness swimming classes in which athletes can prepare to compete in Paralympic swim meets. We began a Jr. wheelchair sports program in which children are able to learn and practice paralympic sports such as wheelchair basketball, power soccer, and hand cycling. We have also

begun a golf program for children with physical disabilities. Most of this growth has occurred because of grants that have been awarded to Miami Dade Parks. One of these grants is the United States Olympic Committee Paralympic Academy grant. Through these grant we were able to fund coaches' fees for our sports programs, gym rentals for wheelchair basketball competitions, and transportation for the children to participate in our programs. Transportation is usually a barrier that most of our participants come across when they want to take part in sports programs. Due to the USOC funding transportation, this was no longer a barrier for our participants. The attendance at our programs grew. Another grant that was awarded was the Unites States Golf Association Adaptive Golf grant. Through this grant, we were able to start a golf program at two of our courses for children with physical disabilities. This program is free to our participants and they are able to learn golf at a professional golf course. The lessons are taught by a professional golf instructor. The children have really enjoyed this program. This grant also helped us purchase two adaptive golf carts. They funded half of that cost. Another grant that we were awarded recently was the Golf Course Builders Association of America-National Recreation and Park Association Sticks for Kids grant. Through this grant, we received 10 full sets of golf clubs with a golf bag each. We have been able to use these golf sets throughout our sites to teach children with disabilities how to play golf. These organizations have really helped in the growth of our paralympic sports program.



Photo captions— **Above left:** Our Miami Heat wheelchair basketball team, **Middle right:** Golf professional Larry Levow teaching golf to participant James Anuff, **Bottom left:** Coach Levow with some of our participants, staff, and volunteers at our golf program.

## In the Spotlight: Ingrid Berges, CTRS



Ingrid Berges, CTRS, joined the Leisure Access Services (LAS) family in April 2006 as a part-time Recreation Leader at Camp Matecumbe. A little more than a year later, Ingrid was hired as a full time Recreation Therapist at Camp Matecumbe, the position she holds today. Ingrid graduated from Florida International University (FIU) in 2005 with a B.S. in Psychology. Shortly after, she was skimming through the Neighbors section in the Miami Herald, and found an article on LAS. She became interested right away, and decided to apply. After a few months of working with LAS, she decided that Recreation Therapy was what she wanted pursue. She re-enrolled in FIU and completed all the classes required to become a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Therapist. In October of 2008, she took her certification exam. Ingrid currently oversees the out of school program at Camp Matecumbe. This program is funded through the Children's Trust and services children 6-22 with varying disabilities. She is a member of the Miami Dade Parks Recreation Committee, Inclusion team, and Paralympic Partners Committee. In the Recreation Committee she serves as the Leisure Access liaison helping other park staff plan accessible recreation activities for people with disabilities throughout the year. In the Inclusion team she is responsible for guiding general park staff to effectively provide inclusion at their programs. In the Paralympic Partners Committee she helps in the development of paralympic sports throughout the county. Besides her involvement in Miami Dade Parks, she is also a member of the Florida Recreation Park Association and the Paralyzed Veterans Association of Florida. She enjoys working for Leisure Access mostly because she loves teaching people with disabilities new skills. Her biggest gratification comes from seeing one of her participants mastering a skill she taught them. Ingrid's main goal while working in Leisure Access is "to continue delivering excellence everyday to people throughout Miami Dade County."

## Inclusion at Miami Dade Parks

Miami Dade Parks continues to provide inclusion at all their program sites. Inclusion is provided effectively due to the effort of the Parks Inclusion Team. This team is composed of general park staff and leisure access services (LAS) staff. They meet regularly to discuss effective ways to provide inclusion to children and adults with disabilities. They travel throughout the County parks to provide extensive training to general park staff. Thanks to these enthusiastic and motivated staff, the number of children with disabilities included in general programs is increasing. There has also been an increase in general park staff organizing inclusion events in which they invite the participants from LAS to join them. On April 10th, Ruben Dario organized an Easter egg hunt and invited the children from an LAS program to participate. The participants from both sites had a great time. It was inclusion at its best. For more on information on inclusion at Miami Dade Parks, please go to [www.miamidade.gov/parks/leisure\\_inclusion](http://www.miamidade.gov/parks/leisure_inclusion) or call (305) 365-3128. The members of the inclusion team are:

**North:** Mitchell Burroughs 305-756-4165  
Rhonda Ham 305-835-7987

**Central:** Dolly Hansen 305-207-1730  
Victor Jenkins 305-274-9666

**South:** Rafael Pineyro 305-270-4950  
**Attractions:** Robert Carmona 305-662-4124

**Arts & Culture:** Isis Roberts 305-638-6771

## Deskercize

Many people may not realize what sitting at a desk for eight hours a day can do to your body. It can build up tension in your muscles and cause your joints to stiffen. There is a possible solution to this problem: "Deskercize". Deskercize is a group of exercises that help people reduce tension while at their desks. On March 24th, two of our Recreational Therapists, Ingrid Berges and Hallie Hodge, created and led a Deskercize session at Miami Dade County Building Department. Supervisors attended the meeting with the intention of teaching their staff these exercises and making deskercize a daily routine at the office. The session was featured on Miami Dade County TV.





## Scout Leaders and Leisure Access improve Camp Matecumbe

On March 28 & 29, a group of Scout Leaders of the South Florida chapter of the Boy Scouts volunteered to make some changes at one of the Leisure Access Sites, Camp Matecumbe. This site was opened since before the 60s. In the 60s, it was used to house the children who arrived from Cuba in the Pedro Pan flights. Parks' employee Bill Solomon was the one who initiated this project. He brought over 10 other Scout Leaders to demolish walls in the gym, take out old furniture, and remove old carpet from one of the buildings. The cost of the work that was done was around \$5,000. A very interesting fact was that some of the Scout Leaders actually lived at this site back in the 60s. Leisure Access would like to thank Mr. Solomon and the other scouts for making this project possible.

## Special Olympic Bocce Ball athletes prepare for competition

A Bocce Ball field was set up at Leisure Access Site Camp Matecumbe by the Special Olympics. Special Olympians came to the site every Wednesday for four weeks to prepare for the Special Olympics Bocce competition. It was a great learning experience for the participants as well as the staff at Camp Matecumbe. They were able to learn about the Olympic sport Bocce as well as meet the star athletes. We look forward to working with these athletes again.



Two athletes preparing for the Special Olympics Bocce Ball competition.

## Family Festival of Arts and Games 2009

On Saturday, February 28, Leisure Access Services, together with Creative Children's Therapy, hosted the 6th Annual Family Festival of Arts & Games. This event gives opportunities for children of all abilities to come together and take part in sports, games, performances, and much more. It was a huge success with more than 550 people attending! Throughout the day, children from Creative Children's Therapy, MD Parks Raices, Leisure Access Services, Roxy Theater, and Greater Miami Youth Symphony put on beautiful performances. They also provided activities such as arts & crafts, fencing, wheelchair basketball, games, and karaoke. Families had a fantastic time as they took advantage of all the wonderful activities available to their children. There was also a resource fair with over 20 organization participating. We would like to thank Commisioner Senator Javier Souto, Miami Dade Cultural Affairs, Creative Children's Therapy, and everyone else that made this event possible.



Participants from Leisure Access Coral Estates with their dance instructor (right) after their performance of "Surfing U.S.A." by the Beach Boys

## Aquatic Programs throughout the County

Leisure Access offers a variety of aquatic programs. These programs include Water Exercises for adults, Fitness Swimming for adults and children with physical disabilities, and learn to swim programs for adults and children with physical disabilities. For information on any of these programs please call 305-382-8160.

## Learn how to play golf from a professional

Leisure Access offers golf lessons for adults and children with physical disabilities. These lessons are taught by a professional instructor. For information on dates, times, and locations please call 305-382-8160.

## Summer Camp for children with disabilities

Leisure Access will hold their annual Summer Camp Program from June 8, 2009-August 14, 2009. This program is funded through The Children's Trust. The programs will be held at 6 sites throughout Miami Dade County. Children will participate in activities such as sports, art & crafts, literacy, field trips, and much more.

For further information, please contact one of our sites listed on the first page of this newsletter or our administrative office at 305-365-3128.

